

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 SY-05 PRS-01 OPR-02 SSO-00 /051 W

----- 033017

R 290546Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 52

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSSAG NKP THAI

DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 5683

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PINR, CB

SUBJ: KC SITUATION IN WEST/NORTHWEST SECTOR OF PHNOM PENH -- II

REF: PHNOM PENH 5368

1. THE REFERENCE TELEGRAM CALLED ATTENTION TO INTELLIGENCE CONCERNING THE HIGH LEVEL OF KC LOSSES IN THE WEST/NORTHWEST SECTOR OF THE CITY, WITH PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE KC FIRST DIVISION. WE HAVE NOW OBTAINED CORRESPONDING INFORMATION CONCERNING A UNIT OF THE KC THIRD DIVISION, WHOSE TACTICAL AREA OF OPERATION LIES SOUTH OF THAT OF THE FIRST DIVISION, IN THE AREA BETWEEN ROUTE 4 AND TUOL LEAP.

2. ON MARCH 14 THREE WOUNDED PRISONERS WERE CAPTURED BY FANK IN THE TUOL LEAP AREA, AGED 18, 20 AND 21, ALL MEMBERS OF A BATTALION OF THE 21ST REGIMENT OF THE THIRD KC DIVISION, WHICH ITSELF IS A UNIT OF THE KC SOUTHWESTERN REGION (REGION 405). THE DIVISION INCLUDES REGIMENTS 20, 21 AND 22. THEIR 21ST REGIMENT HAS FOUR NUMBERED BATTALIONS, AND THEIR BATTALION FOUR NUMBERED COMPANIES.

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3. ACCORDING TO THE THREE PRISONERS, WHO WERE INTERROGATED SEPARATELY, THEIR BATTALION HAD A STRENGTH OF 700 IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE START OF THE DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE ON JANUARY 1. WHEN ASKED THE PRESENT EFFECTIVE (FOR-HOLE) STRENGTH, ONE GAVE IT AS 200 AND ONE AS 180. THEY ADDED THAT TROOP MORALE WAS LOW, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE HEAVY PERSONNEL LOSSES SUFFERED IN COMBAT DURING THE PRESENT OFFENSIVE. MALARIA WAS WIDESPREAD AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES INSUFFICIENT. ONE OF THE PRISONERS SAID THAT MANY SOLDIERS HAD DESERTED THEIR BATTALION AND RETURNED TO THEIR VILLAGES. ANOTHER SAID THAT NEARLY ALL THE MEMBERS OF HIS PLATOON HAD RECENTLY BEEN KILLED IN ACTION AT KHLA KAUN.

4. COMMENTING ON THE ABOVE, A DATT ANALYST HERE POINTS OUT THAT THIS INFORMATION SUPPORTS EARLIER FANK REPORTING AS TO ESTIMATED HIGH CASUALTIES TAKEN BY UNITS IN THE THIRD DIVISION AREA SINCE JANUARY. ALTHOUGH BOTH THE STARTING FIGURE OF 700 FOR THE PRISONERS' BATTALION AND THEIR ESTIMATE OF NEARLY 500 COMBAT LOSSES MAY AT FIRST GLANCE APPEAR EXAGGERATED, THE ANALYST NOTES THAT IN PREVIOUS KC DRY SEASON OFFENSIVES THE ENEMY HAS BEEN KNOWN TO BEEF UP UNITS EXPECTED TO FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN COMBAT OPERATIONS TO AS MUCH AS DOUBLE THEIR NORMAL STRENGTH. HE ALSO TAKES NOTE OF THE HIGH DESERTION RATE IN THIS UNIT, WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO THE HIGH CASUALTY LOSS TOTALS. AND FINALLY, HE RECALLS THAT THE DIVISION WAS HEAVILY ENGAGED IN JANUARY IN THE ANG SNOUL AREA AND THIS MONTH IN THE TUOL LEAP AREA.

5. AS A PARENTHETICAL COMMENT, THE EMBASSY IS NOW PREPARING A SUMMARY TELEGRAM ON KC OVERALL COMBAT LOSSES FOR MARCH WHICH WILL SHOW SOME 3,200 KILLED IN ACTION, AS COMPARED WITH 1,900 FOR FEBRUARY AND 4,600 FOR JANUARY. THIS GIVES A ROUGH INDEX OF THE RELATIVE INTENSITY OF THE FIGHTING DURING THESE THREE MONTHS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ITINERARY, HEALTH, AIR TRANSPORTATION, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, COMBAT OPERATIONS, CAT-C, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PHNOM05683
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P840178-1516, D750110-0454
From: PHNOM PENH
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975034/aaaaadfc.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 71653, 75 STATE 71677, 75 PHNOM PENH 5368, STATE 71677 (JAKARTA 3688), STATE 71653
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 JUL 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <09 JUL 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEPARTURE OF LON NOL FROM CAMBODIA
TAGS: MOPS, PINR, PGOV, PINT, PFOR, CB, US, (LON NOL), (LONG BORET)
To: STATE SS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006